The Agent-Focus construction in Ixil Maya:

A descriptive/formal analysis

by

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For my parents

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This Master's report describes the Agent Focus construction in Ixil Mayan discourse and proposes a bi-clausal analysis that is discussed within the framework of Lexical Functional Grammar (Bresnan, 2001; Dalrymple, 2001). Many previous analyses of the Agent focus construction have proposed a monoclausal analysis of this construction in other Mayan languages (Aissen, 1992 [Mayan languages in general], 1999 [Tzotzil]; Broadwell, 2000 [Kaqchikel]; Duncan, 2003 [Tzutujil]; Norman & Campbell, 1978 [Proto-Maya]). This analysis differs from these in that I assume the Agent focus construction is a complex, that is, bi-clausal cleft construction. Evidence for this analysis comes from a discussion of the Agent Focus construction in other Mayan languages, and facts about Ixil syntax, and the usage of the Agent Focus in Ixil discourse. I use Lambrecht's (2001) framework of a cross linguistic typology of cleft construction to establish the function of the Agent Focus in Ixil.

Table of Context

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyze the Agent focus construction (hereafter AF construction or just AF) in Ixil, Maya discourse and syntax. I will propose an analysis of the construction within the formalism of Lexical Functional Grammar [LFG] (Bresnan, 2001; Dalrymple, 2001). Contrary to previous mono-clausal approaches to AF constructions in other Mayan languages (Aissen, 1992 [Mayan languages in general], 1999 [Tzotzil]; Broadwell, 2000 [Kaqchikel]; Duncan, 2003 [Tzutujil]; Norman & Campbell, 1978 [Proto-Maya]), I will propose a bi-clausal approach which accounts for its unique syntactic form and its usage as a specificational cleft construction in discourse (following especially Lambrecht, 2001). This bi-clausal analysis follows from descriptions of focus-constructions in grammars (see especially England, 1983a:243 [Mam]), in paper presentations (Berqvist, 2007; Tonhauser, 2003 [both Yucatecan]), and descriptions (Ayers, 1983 [Ixil]; Dayley, 1981 [Pan-Mayan]). I show that the agent in the AF has a local focus reading (Rooth, 1992) and expresses contrast (England, 1988) as opposed to its normal pragmatic role as topic. Below is an example of the agent focus construction next to its active-direct equivalent[1], followed by an AF with two absolutives (presupposed content is given in curly brackets and focus readings are enclosed in brackets).

1. Ixil Agent-Focus construction [2]
a) Neutral active-direct transitive[3]

[Kat= un-tzok]	*{u*	*si'-e'}*
comp.=1sErg.-CUT.3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'I cut the firewood.'

[1] I take and active direct sentence to be a regular transitive clause where the arguments take their normal pragmatic roles: the ergative argument is topical and the absolutive is part of the focus.
[2] All Ixil examples, unless otherwise specified, are taken from my notes. They are all from the Nebaj variety.
[3] A note is necessary for the connectives in the glosses. I use (-) to indicate an affix, and (=) to indicate a clitic.

b) Agent-Focus cleft construction
[In] *{kat=tzok-**on*** *u* *si'-e'}*
1sAbs. compl.=CUT-**af**.3Abs. def. FIREWOOD-enc.
'It is me who cut the firewood.'

c) AF with two absolutives
[In] *{ni=loch-on=axh}*
1sAbs. incompl.-HELP-af=2sAbs.
'It is I who is helping you.'

The major task of this analysis will be to account for the unusual agreement pattern found in the AF construction. Notice in example 1 that the regular active-direct transitive alignment of ergative-absolutive agreement pronouns attached to the verb is broken in the AF construction, yet semantically/pragmatically the transitive relation still holds. In other words, the verb in the AF does not agree with the agent argument as a verb would normally do in a transitive, active-direct sentence. Normally, only one absolutive pronoun is allowed in a clause in Ixil, but in the AF there are two. In the AF, as many have noted, the verb is morphologically detransitivised, due to the lack of ergative agreement on the verb that is indicative of transitivity in Mayan languages (Dayley, 1985). The question is how to *syntactically* account for the transitive relation in the face of an apparent *detransitivation* of that transitive verb. A syntactic account of this construction will be a major contribution of this paper.

In particular, I show that the AF is a complex, bi-clausal cleft construction based on its unique morphosyntax, and its usage in discourse[4]. This has three implications: First, the construction has two predicate heads, one a hidden focus-identity predicate, and the other a complement clause predicate with an agent argument that is anaphorically controlled (I will suggest a PRO null anaphor) by the matrix subject of

[4] Tonhauser (2007) calls similar constructions in Yucatec cleft constructions. She does not explain, however, how the construction can be formalized in a formal theory of syntax.

the hidden focus copula (hereafter F_{cop}). The second implication is that the semantic transitive relation is preserved even though the subordinate predicate is morphologically intransitive (i.e. lacks the ergative pronoun). Finally, the reason for this marked structure (in Ixil, at least) is not captured in global discourse terms as it is in Yucatec (Tonhauser, 2007) and Akateko (Zavala, 1997). Rather, like other clefts, the AF is used to express clause level contrast (England, 1988 [Mayan]; Rooth, 1992 [in general]). This will be expressed in my analysis as the grammaticalized discourse function FOCUS (Bresnan, 2001; Dalrymple, 2001)

2. Background on Mayan and Ixil syntax

2.1 Mayan grammar and cleft constructions

In this section I will lay out the important facts concerning the structure of Mayan languages in general. Importantly, I will show that there is good evidence for a bi-clausal analysis of cleft constructions. To do so, I must establish that there is consistent focus marking in these languages using what has been called a focus particle in the literature (England, 1988), and sometimes the focus predicate is hidden, i.e. not expressed. This is especially true in AF constructions in Ixil.

The Mayan language family is predominantly predicate initial, with alternate orders of constituents arising in marked discourse situations. The original order of constituents is said to be VOS (England, 1991). No Mayan languages mark case on nominal arguments; instead, ergative-absolutive pronouns are incorporated onto the verb to link nominals to their semantic roles.

2. Typical Mayan transitive construction (Pérez & Jiménez, 1997 [Mam])

ma	*Ø*	*n-txok-e'*
aspect	3Abs.	1sErg-invite-enc.1s

'I invited him/her'

Ergative pronouns also are attached to nominals in all languages to indicate possession, as well as to introduce oblique arguments known as relational nouns. These are shown here:

3. Ergatives on oblique arguments [relational nouns] (England, 1988)

a. Kaqchikel	**b. Mam**
w-uma	*w-u'n*-e'
1sErg-FOR	1sErg.-FOR-1s.
'for me'	'for me'

4. Procession of nominals using ergatives [Yucatec]

a-buul
2Erg.-BEANS
'your beans'

As can be seen from these few examples, Mayan languages are head marking languages. And, as alluded to, they prefer that the head comes first in whatever constituent it is found, whether they be NP's or sentence level S's.

Absolutive pronouns in Mayan languages are the least marked members of the ergative-absolutive paradigm. When a predicate is detransitivised as in passive and antipassive constructions, the absolutive is the site of 'promotion' (Dayley, 1985).

5. Passive sentence in Ixil

Kat=loch-pu=in	*tan u naj*
compl.-HELP-ps.=1sAbs.	by def. man

'I was helped by the man'

Absolutives are also used to mark arguments of stative predicates, as in:

6. Stative Predicate (Pérez & Jiménez, 1997 [Mam])

Wa'l-qe'	*xjaal*
ON.FOOT.3pAbs.	person

'The people are on foot'

Existence in Mayan languages is expressed in a similar way with a stative predicate.

7. Predicate of existence [Ixil]

at	*q'uuj*	*tzitzi?*
EXIST.3Abs.	Queztal	there

'Are there Quetzal birds there?'

One might expect that this verb is used with cleft constructions, namely, we might assume that this predicate introduces the focal element of a cleft. However, this verb-of-existence is not used in situations of cleft constructions.. This means it is not used in the '*it is… '* part of the cleft construction. Rather, another word (*j)aa* is used. This word has been called a focus marker/emphasis particle in the literature (I will call it a

Focus copula, or F_{cop}). An example of the focus particle in given in the following example (8b), paired with its non-focal counterpart (8a):

8.

a. Regular intransitive (England, 1988 [Kaqchikel])
Xwär-Ø ri tetata'
SLEEP-3Abs. def. ELDER
'The elder slept'

b. Cleft construction equivalent using (j)aa
Ja ri tetata' xwär-Ø
F_{cop}.3sAbs def. ELDER SLEEP-3sAbs.
'It was the elder who slept'

This particle exists in virtually all branches of the language family. It is used when focus contrast is expressed over a nominal argument. Dayley (1985) and Duncan (2003) provide some interesting typological usages of this focus particle. Specifically, in Tz'utujil this particle indicates definiteness, is used as the relative pronoun, as a clefting particle, and as the independent third person pronoun. Notice that these constructions with (*j)aa* are similar to stative predicates. Specifically, there is never aspect attached to the predicate, as in verbal events; and the absolutive and nominal argument follow the predicate in both:

Figure 1. Stative predicates

(Stative predicate+[abs.]) Nominal argument

Figure 2. (j)aa predicate

(Stative predicate+[abs.]) Nominal argument, Complement clause

However, it is clear that there are some differences between regular stative predicates and the *(j)aa* predication. Formally, the subject nominal argument is treated the same

in both types. The difference lies in the addition of a complement clause in the *(j)aa* construction. This complement clause is a direct argument of the *(j)aa* predicate, and is controlled by the subject of the F_{cop} *(j)aa* predicate. In the Kaqchikel example above, the cleft construction establishes a control relation between the absolutive function of the F_{cop} and the subject of an intransitive verb, both of which take absolutive marking. In Mayan languages, in complement clauses the controller and the controlee are absolutive, with no exception that I am aware of. Notice in the following examples from K'ichee' that there is no alternative, marked morphological expression of the ergative-absolutive pattern on the downstairs verb. This is the case because the focal elements do not control an ergative agent. They are cases of control between absolutive arguments.

9. Cleft constructions in K'ichee' (Trechsel, 1993)

a. Subject of intransitive cleft

Oj *x-uj-tzaaq-ik*
We aspect-1pAbs.-FALL-status
'We are the ones who fell'

b. Patient of transitive cleft

Aree *x-Ø-qa-ch'aab'e-ej*
F_{cop}.3Ind. aspect-3sAbs.-1pErg.-SPEAK.TO-status
'He is the one we spoke to'

Notice first that there is no special morphology associated with the embedded verb that indicates dependent status. The syntactic difference between the non-cleft counterparts is the fronting of a nominal independent pronoun (based on the absolutive set) in 9a. and the focus copula *aree* in 9b. The ergative-absolutive pattern is found in the case of an embedded transitive predicate (c.f. 9b) when the filler/binder controls another argument with an absolutive pronoun.

Absolutives in Mayan languages are the less marked paradigm in the sense that you can not express ergatives in these focus situations, but also in other ways. Dayley (1981) suggests these reasons as well: a. absolutive paradigms have null case inflection (third person singular), b. they are obligatorily present on all predicates (exception: the imperfect split-ergative pattern in some languages), and c. they feed syntactic processes (i.e. they are the cites for 'promotion'). These syntactic processes have to do with promotion and demotion of arguments in valence operations, as well as subordinate clause anaphora. More than this, the absolutive paradigm has an intricate relation to the structure of discourse and the pragmatic nature of argument structure in the grammars of Mayan languages (Dubois, 1987; England & Martin, 2003). Further, "absolutives pattern differently from ergatives in that only absolutives can be directly focused, negated, or questioned, only absolutives control EQUI-like deletion…" (England, 1983b)

A marked type of control exists in Mayan languages when a transitive agent is controlled by an absolutive argument. This happens when the absolutive subject of the F_{cop} controls the *agent* of a subordinated transitive verb, this has been called *ergative extraction/promotion* (Bergqvist, 2007; England, 1983b; Kaufman, 1990; Smith-Stark, 1978). There seems to be a consistent rule in Mayan languages that treats the ergative member of a transitive verb as a special case for control. Namely, ergative arguments must be 'extracted' from subordinate verbs. The postverbal morphemes *–(o)n*, and *–(o)w*, across the language family, are used to indicate the application of the *extraction* rule on a subordinate verb (first described by Smith-Stark, 1978). The languages vary in how this extraction is expressed. Namely, many

of the AF cleft constructions in Mayan clearly involve valence changing antipassive processes with indications of dependent clause structures, as in the Mam example below. In AF contexts in Mam, Q'eqchi', Poqomam, and Poqomchi' (Steibals, 2006), the original patient argument is demoted to an oblique role and the agent (ergative) is promoted to an absolutive relation to the predicate in a classic antipassive fashion. Notice in the following example from Mam that the cleft construction has a subordinate verb with a dependent aspect marker and the AF morpheme/absolutive antipassive *–n*[5], clearly suggesting a bi-clausal analysis.

10. Agent-focus cleft construction in Mam (England, 1983a)

aa	*qiina*	*xhin*	*juusa-na*	*t-e*	*chib'aj*
F_{cop}	1sAbs.	dep.aspect.1sAbs.	BURN-ap.	3sErg.-RN	FOOD

'It was I who burned the food'

England (1983a:242) says of this example, "the analysis that I favor is that nominal constituents preposed to verbs without relational nouns are statives, and are therefore non-verbal sentences followed by embedded clauses"[6]. The AF morpheme also occurs in Mam (and Ixil) in relative clauses, and in at least Mam takes a subordinate aspect.

The status of clauses marked with *–on* suggest that the morpheme indicates an alternative status (in terms of information structure) of the ergative argument. Broadly speaking, this morpheme either allows the ergative member to be either promoted to a focus interpretation, and/or allows the ergative member to be controlled by a matrix absolutive argument. Likewise in Q'anjob'al the *–on*

[5] This morpheme –n is used for both an AF alignment and as a classic absolutive antipassive depending on the language. In Ixil the same morpheme is used in both types of constructions. The difference between the two in Ixil will become more clear in the section on Ixil syntax.
[6] England also says that the alternate analysis of nominal fronting is not ruled out. The purpose of the present paper is to rule out the nominal fronting analysis, at least in the Mamean family.

morpheme has the AF function as well as being a subordinate clause indicator on transitive verbs. Mateo-Toledo (2006) calls these *–on* marked subordinate complexes aspectless clauses. Here is an example:

11. Two functions of –on in Q'anjob'al

a) AF construction

A	*ix unin*	*max-ach*	*kol-on-i*
F_{cop}	ncl. CHILD	compl-2sAbs.	HELP-af-sta.

'It was the child that helped you.'

b) Transitive Aspectless clause

Y-et	*hach*	*s-kol-on-i*
When	2sAbs.	3sErg-HELP-af.-sta.

'When she helped you.'

Further evidence from negation supports a subordinate analysis of *–on* marked verbs (England, 1983a.). In negative AF constructions the fronted nominal is (at least in the Mamean family) negated with the negative particle used with stative/non-verbal predicates, indicating that the stative is the matrix clause. An example from Awakateko (from the Mamean family) is given below:

12. Negative AF in Awaketeco (Delgado & Mateo, in press)

Nq'eetz	*yaaj*	*na-Ø-tx'aj-oon*	*e'ch b'echoq*
Stative.neg.	MAN	incom.-3Abs.-WASH-af.	PL. CLOTHES

'It is not men who wash clothes'

2.2 The Monoclausal analysis of the AF construction.

The alternative, focus-nominal fronting, monoclausal analysis has been used to describe this preverbal position in all Mayan languages (Aissen, 1992). In that paper Aissen discusses the preverbal topic and focus positions via X-bar theory to account for preverbal orders. There she assumes that there is a preverbal position, a specifier of a functional phrase IP. This position licenses focused phrases, and agrees with the

functional head I (for inflection), which is associated with the focus feature [+Focus]. She proposes a monoclausal approach to sentences with focus, cleft-semantics. Below I lay out the analysis given in Broadwell (2000) as it follows Aissen's (1992) analysis, but in terms of LFG.

Kaqchikel [Maya] is a predicate initial language that allows both VSO and VOS orders. Broadwell (2000) suggests that there is a marked SVO order that is allowed in contexts of indefinite agents as in:

13. Kaqchikel data
a. Regular transitive clause

X-u-b'a	*ri tz'i*	*ri me's*
com-3sErg.-BITE	def. DOG	def. CAT

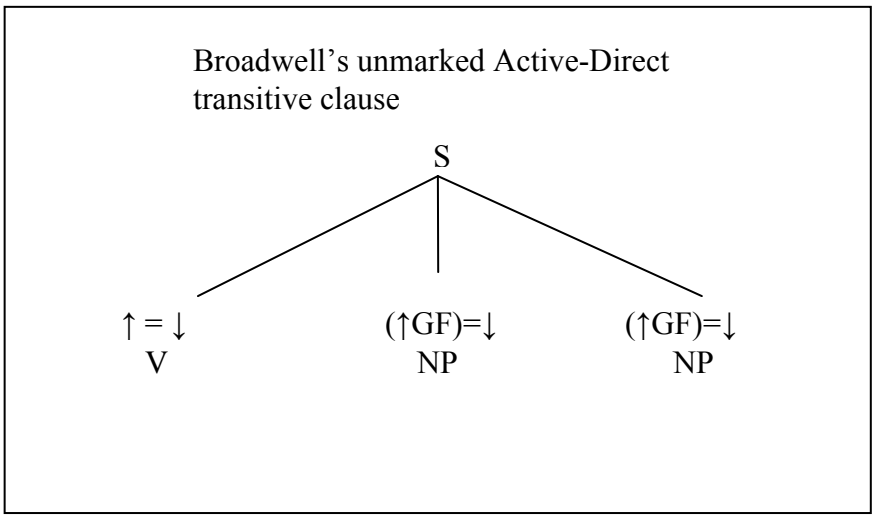
'The dog bit the cat'

b. 'Marked' SVO order

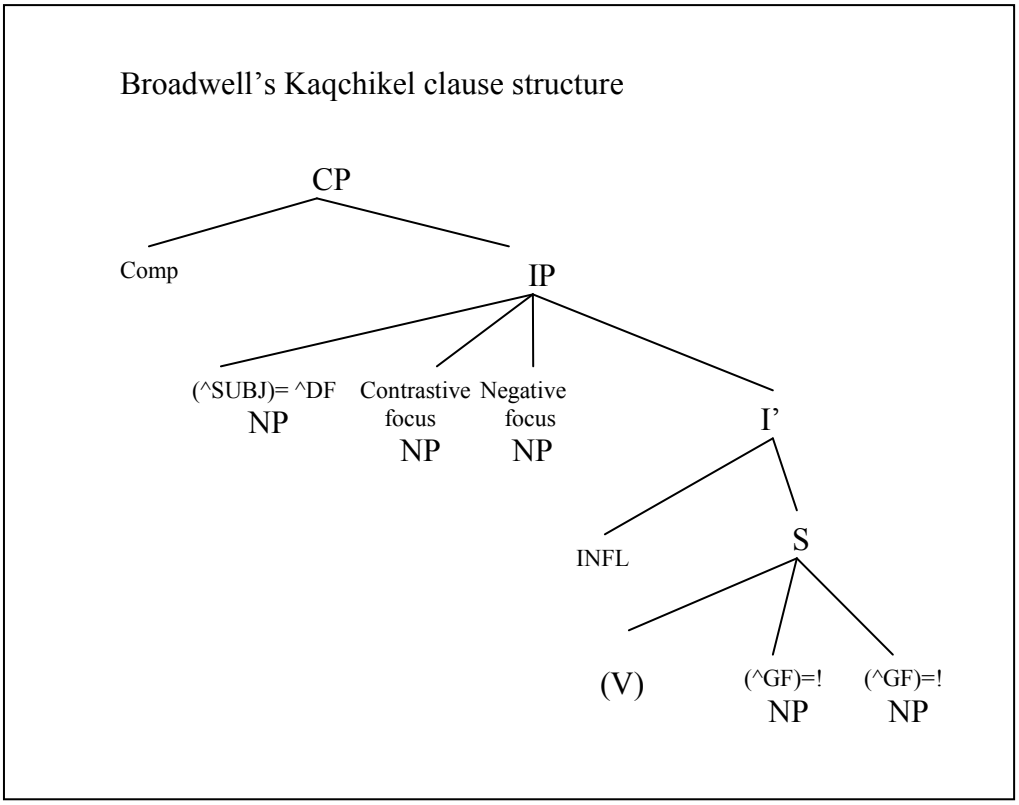
Jun tz'i'	*x-b'a'-o*	*ri a Juan*
indef. DOG	compl-BITE-af	def. Juan

'A dog bit Juan'

Broadwell proposes two types of clause structures for his analysis of Kaqchikel, one exocentric/flat clause structure for the unmarked type of clause, and an endocentric clause structure for the marked SVO orders. For the flat, unmarked clause structure Broadwell proposes this diagram:



Here the basic transitive clause is shown to be a flat, rather simple structure. The verbal predicate comes first, followed by its nominal arguments. This structure covers most basic sentences, but as stated, does not account for SVO structures. To do so, Broadwell (2000) suggests a more marked structure. In these marked cases the subject resides in spec IP and the verb is moved to head position within that projection, as in:



This gives Kaqchikel two options: it may project a minimal, exocentric S or a more elaborated endocentric IP. Broadwell argues that since the SVO is more complicated, it is more marked.

The point of this section is to show that these analyses extend this analysis to the whole language family. AF constructions have a SVO structure due to the feature

[+Focus] associated with the specIP that must be checked by bringing the subject out of its original place in the structure. My analysis will show that the above analysis is not applicable to the whole language family, as the AF in Mamean languages, at least, do not seem to be monoclausal. In fact, it is unlikely that any Mayan language has a monoclausal AF construction given the general analysis of cleft constructions in Lambrecht (2001) and the discussion of cleft constructions in Yucatec (Tonhauser 2007).

2.3 The AF in Mayan discourse

This brings us to the account of the AF in its discourse contexts. In Kaqchikel, as well as in Tzotzil (Aissen, 1999), the AF construction is used in contexts of obviation, where two third person nominals are juxtaposed in the same clause. In these analyses AF is used when the agent is indefinite. This is, as they argue, a marked expression for an agent of a transitive clause, as a normal expression of the agent would be some sort of definite expression, reflecting a natural tendency for agents to be topical, and/or already introduced in the discourse. Broadwell (2000:8) says of the notion of obviation that:

> within an obviation span containing two third person nominals, one nominal (the proximate) is ranked higher and the other (the obviative) is ranked lower…the proximate nominal is generally the one that is more central and topical, though notions of speaker empathy play a role as well.

The AF construction in these languages, therefore, deals with a situation where the agent is the obviative argument and the patient is proximate, the marked situation. Aissen (1999) therefore calls the AF an inverse voice triggered by an indefinite third person agent and definite third person patient. The AF is therefore a marked expression of a transitive predicate. This analysis of the AF as an alternate voice is

echoed in Tonhauser's (2007) work. However, the trigger for the voice is different in Yucatec, as the AF in Yucatec relies on the distribution of focal agents (not indefinite agents).

Tonhauser (2007 [Yucatec]) has suggested that the AF is a type of alternate transitive voice construction that is sensitive to the *macro* discourse concept, the Discourse-Topic (DT)[7]. Her argument for this depends on the discourse facts in these languages. Specifically, Tonhauser notes that the distribution of transitive relations in Yucatec discourse favor the suppressing of the DT(e.g., the referent is only referred to by verbal morphology). The DT can be considered, in general, the prominent entity in the discourse. For example, if the discourse is a narrative, the DT will be the main character. The DT can be thought of as the perspective from which a discourse proceeds, and in most cases is the reason for passives and other valence operations. The DT is different from the local presupposition (Presupposition or sentence topic), and is best established by asking a question (Büring, 1999). In Yucatec, Tonhauser (2003:221) argues that the active-direct transitive voice "requires the current discourse topic to be agent of the eventuality". If this is not the case, i.e. the agent is someone (something) other than the DT, then other voices are required. The passive voice is one option whereby the DT is realized as a semantic patient, and promoted to subject of an intransitive; the agent is demoted to an oblique role. However, as Tonhauser (2007) states:

> …certain eventualities do not allow the demotion of the (non-discourse topic) transitive agent: these eventualities are characterized by a transitive agent participant that although not the discourse topic, is nevertheless central to the eventuality and emphatic in its information-structural contribution…

[7] See also Zavala (1997) for a similar account of the AF in Akateco [Maya].

The AF therefore are characterized in discourse for having a both an informationally marked patient and and an informationally marked agent. The patient is abnormally the discourse topic, and the agent is normally not part of the focal partition of a sentence. Tonhauser explains further:

> This is not the case of the 'unpredictable' event participant that is realized by F-constructions: a focused, questioned, or relativized transitive agent is central to the eventuality (e.g., *who* in *Who saw Juan?*), that cannot be demoted and realized as an oblique argument by the passive voice.

This unpredictable agent therefore must be specified by a specific type of construction. In some languages cleft constructions are specifically designed to handle this marked information situation. Tonhauser calls these constructions in Yucatec *Focus-constructions.* And as she argues, the AF constitutes an alternate transitive voice for these reasons:

> The Agent Focus voice, as a transitive voice, realizes 'unpredictable' transitive agents without demoting them. At the same time, it is the marked transitive voice due to its restricted occurrence and because it marks eventualities as realizing a non-discourse topic agent.

AF voice in Yucatec, therefore is an alternate transitive voice that is designed to handle situations where the focal element is the agent. This is to say that Yucatec has the AF as an option specifically designed to handle a sentence where the DT is a patient of a transitive predicate and the agent is the focal. Both the focal subject and the topical patient are too important to the discourse to suppress via valence reducing constructions.

While global discourse factors might be important factors in Yucatec, and syntactic factors in Tzotzil and Kaqchikel (determined by definiteness) neither of these seem to be important in Ixil. Ixil is sensitive to local, clause level information structure distributions of topic and focus. In fact, as will be seen later, the AF acts

just like a canonical cleft construction as described by Lambrecht (2001). This is to say that the AF is bi-clausal complex construction specifically designed to articulate marked, alternate information structure distributions working at the level of the clause.

3.0 Framework for cleft constructions

In this section I will briefly define the terms I am using for the description of the AF in Ixil. Specifically I will define the core information structure terms *topic, focus*, and especially the term *cleft construction*. I will use primarily Lambrecht's (2001) definition of clefts, given here:

> A CLEFT CONSTRUCTION (CC) is a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative or relative-like clause whose relativized argument is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions.

As indicated above, the basic and most fundamental aspect of a cleft construction is the fact that a single proposition is expressed via bi-clausal syntax without a change in the truth conditions. Further, a cleft construction as a grammatical answer to discourse-functional needs ensures proper focus readings.

Primary to my discussion of cleft constructions will be the status of topic/focus divisions in clauses of the world's languages. The idea is that we can package information in different structural ways, whether they be syntactic, morphological, or intonationally; given different information needs of the speaker. The question centers on why sentences with the same propositional truth conditions are packaged structurally in different ways. For example:

14. a. Mary hates chocolate.
b. Chocolate, Mary hates.

In this example we see that the sentence is organized according to what information the speaker thinks is most important to the addressee. These differences are due to particular communicative demands placed on the speakers by the context of utterance.

Each different way in which a proposition can be packaged is referred to as an instruction.

The different types of instructions are based on regular ways in which a speaking community organizes universal language primitives. I will define topic as 'the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is ABOUT" (Lambrecht, 1994:118). In most common transitive constructions the predicate is *about* the subject. More than this, topicality has to deal with the relevance to the current discourse. It therefore has two major characteristics; a topic expresses aboutness and is relevant to the current discourse. The focus of a sentence is the portion of the proposition that is unexpected, and unrecoverable from the context (this is why it is sometimes called new information). I further take the definition given in both Rooth (1992) and Beaver & Clark, (to appear) to be relevant, namely that focus entails a pragmatically constrained set of referents, and assertions (sentences) usually specify one of those referents (the focus figures out the *who* in *Who done it*?: ***John*$_{\textbf{foc}}$** *did it*). The *focus* partition is the new, or unpredictable information. The presupposition/topic partitions highlight old/contextually-available information that is accessible to the speakers. Below is an example in Ixil of how choice of sentence form is determined by the information structure context:

15. Content-agent question-answer pair

Question:

Ab'il kat=loq'-on	*u*	*chik-e'?*
WHO compl.=BUY-af.3Abs.	def.	SKIRT-enc.

'Who bought the skirt?'

Answer

a) Felicitous answer with agent-focus

Axh	*kat=loq'-on*	*u*	*chik-e'?*
2sAbs.	compl.=BUY-af..3Abs.	def.	SKIRT-enc.

'It is you who bought the skirt.'

b) Infelicitous answer with regular active-direct morphology

#Kat=a-loq'		*u*	*chik-e'?*
compl.=2Erg-BUY.3Abs.		def.	SKIRT-enc.

'You bought the skirt.'

This shows that when a question is about an agent in Ixil you must package it in a AF construction. Some languages use alternate syntax and morphological distinctions to correctly package information. Ixil is one of these languages, which uses cleft-dislocation and morphology to handle different packages[8].

Lambrecht (1992) argues that grammars of natural languages formally express three kinds[9] of focus-presupposition articulations. These categories correspond crucially to their communicative function. The first and most common distributionally, and least marked morphologically, is the *predicate-focus* type. The function of the *predicate-focus* type is to take a given, topical argument and add new/focal information to it. This is the common subject-predicate distinction which harkens back to Aristotle's logic. As Lambrecht (2001: 486; brackets added) states, the predicate focus category:

> is unmarked both distributionally (it can appear in more discourse environments than the other two) and semantically (it can be used to express propositions with the AF or SF articulation [argument & sentence focus respectively], while the AF and SF categories cannot be used to express propositions with PF [predicate-focus] articulation). To some extent, the PF category is also formally unmarked, in that PF sentences often lack morphosyntactic features found in AF or SF sentences.

[8] It is likely that intonation has a role in the information structure system of Ixil. More research needs to be done on the empirical study of stress and pitch patterns in Ixil.

[9] I will only discuss the first two in this paper, as sentence-focus is irrelevant to the discussion.

The predicate-focus articulation is therefore the more frequent and most usual way to add information to a given topic.

The argument-focus type takes an argument and ensures that the focal reading is placed squarely on the shoulders of the argument in question. This is to say that we start with a presupposed event, and add to it a new/focal argument. More specifically, it marks the fact that the argument-in-focus is the specified option taken from a contextually defined set in relation to the topical/presupposed event. Quickly, we can see the difference between the predicate and argument focus types in the following question/answer pairs from Ixil:

16. Question answer pairs
a) Predicate-focus pair

Q. Kam *n-a-b'an-e'?*
Q-word imper.-2Erg-DO-enc.
'What are you doing?'

A. N-un-loch *un-txutx-e'*
incomp.-1sErg-HELP.3Abs 1sErg.-MOM-enc.
'I am helping my mother'

b) Argument-focus pair

Q. Abil *ni-loch-**on*** *u ixoj-e?*
Who incom.-HELP-**af**.3Abs. def. GIRL-enc.
'Who is helping the girl?"

A. In *ni-loch-**on*** *u ixoj-e.*
1sAbs. incom.-HELP-**af**.3Abs. def. GIRL-enc.
'It is I who is helping the girl.'

Lambrecht (2001) argues that one of the fundamental ways in which argument focus sentences are expressed is through cleft formation[10]. He states that clefts have three characteristics: 1) They are headed by a copula, and have a relative, or a relative-like

[10] The other two are prosodic shifts, and syntactic shifts.

clause whose relativized argument is coindexed with the predicative argument of the copula; 2) they are bi-clausal; 3) and finally taking the two clauses together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which could be expressed in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions. Specifically, according to Lambrecht (2001) specificational clefts are motivated by two principles, which also motivate the AF:

> Principle 1:
> The occurrence of cleft constructions in a language correlates with the degree of positional freedom of prosodic accents and syntactic constituents in that language.

In Ixil, until more research is done, the degree of positional freedom resides solely on the syntax. Specifically, it is being argued that the agent-focus and the AF are clefts, headed by a focus predicate that selects a focused transitive agent and a presupposed event. The second principle is a functional motivation and corresponds to unwanted information structure readings:

> Principle 2:
> Cleft constructions are focus-marking devices used to prevent unintended predicate-focus construal of a proposition. Clefts serve to mark as focal an argument that might otherwise be construed as nonfocal, or as non-focal a predicate that might otherwise be construed as focal, or both.

As Lambrecht observes, principle 2 is meant to account for the fact that the "marking of an argument as focal may entail the marking of the predicate (or rather the open proposition minus the argument) as *nonfocal*" (2001). This fits the functional and grammatical characteristics quite well in Ixil AF's as the presupposed AF verb is marked (-*on*) in relation to the focal agent.

As a result of these characteristics, the cleft's main function is to specify, by grammatical means, the proper distributions of focus-presupposition partitions. This is why they are sometimes called *specificational clefts.* Specificational clefts are

used to exhaustively distinguish the proper referent as focal. This means that the main function of the AF construction (and focus-constructions in general) is to ensure the proper referent is picked out of a set of possible discourse referents, that is, specify the proper referent as focal.

According to Lambrecht (2001), the issue that clearly distinguishes clefts from other complex constructions is the fact that they express a single semantic proposition via bi-clausal syntax. This fact alone, Lambrecht argues, suggests that we can not account for these complex constructions in terms of other parts of the grammar (e.g., semantics or morpho-syntax). An independent explanation via the grammatical expression of information structure is necessary.

4.0 Ixil Data

In this section I will lay out the basic grammatical facts of Ixil which will be relevant for the analysis of the AF. I will attempt to show how the grammatical facts alluded to in the Mayan grammar section are articulated in Ixil. Specifically, I will show how cleft constructions are built from available constructions in Ixil, and also give some examples from Ixil discourse to show how focus AF constructions are used to express contrast, focus semantics.

4.1 Basic Clause structure

Ixil is a VSO language spoken in the western highlands of Guatemala by about 75,000 speakers, primarily in the towns of Nebaj, Chajul, and Cotzal. It is a head-marking, predicate initial language. There is no case marking on NP's. Linking of arguments to semantic roles is done through pronouns attached to the verb. The lexical arguments of a verb need not, and do not often appear, as there is strong verbal morphology that references the participant(s) of the verb via ergative-absolutive incorporated pronouns. The paradigm is given in the following table, followed by another example of an active-direct VSO sentence.

Table 1. Ergative-absolutive verbal agreement/pronouns

	Ergative prefixes _V/_C	**Absolutive postverbal clitics**[11]
1st singular	v-/un-	=in
2nd	VV-[12]/a-	=axh
3rd	t-/i-	Ø
1st plural	q-/ku-	=o’
2nd	VV-/a-	=e’ex
3rd	t-/i-	Ø

17. Default active-direct VSO order[13]**:**

Kat=i-loq’	*u-ixoj*	*ma’l*	*ch’iick*
compl.=3Erg.-BUY.3Abs.	def.-WOMAN	indef.	DRESS
V	**S**	**O**	

‘The woman bought a dress’**.**

Statives in Ixil follow the general pattern of Mayan language stative predicates. They do not take aspect, and the only argument is cross-referenced with an absolutive attached to the stative predicate.

17. Stative predicates in Ixil

a) Predicative adjective

Nim-chit=in

BIG-VERY=1sAbs.

‘I am very big/tall’

[11] I call these clitics because they are not exclusively attached to the end of a verb stem. Other clitics are allowed to appear between the verb and the absolutive. Notice also that the 3rd person plural pronouns are identical to the singular 3rd person pronoun.

[12] Second person ergative before vowels results in the lengthening of the vowel at the beginning of the verb.

[13] Ayers (1991) claims that there is an alternate SVO order. I do not agree with this analysis as in the cases of ‘fronted’ subjects they are intonationally separate, much like the analysis of external topics in Mayan languages (Aissen, 1992). In these cases of ‘SVO’ there remains in the original post-verbal slot required subjects that are essentially full nominals, and not cases of resumptive pronouns, or the like.

b) Numeral predicate
Oxval=o'
THREE=1pAbs.
'There are three of us'

c) Positional predicate (Ayers, 1991)
Pamkin u naj-e'
FAT.3Abs. def. MAN-enc.
'The man is fat'

The predicate of existence is used in many situations where English would use a copula verb. I reproduce example 7 here:

18. Predicate of existence [Ixil]
at q'uuj tzitzi?
EXIST.3Abs. quetzal there
'Are there quetzal birds there?'

This predicate-of-existence is similar to stative predication in that there is no aspect attached it. It is used in to express locative, existential, and even possessive meanings. Interestingly enough like the other Mayan languages this predicate is not used in cleft constructions in Ixil, as one might expect given its 'copula' like meanings. Rather, the F_{cop} *a* is used. However, Ixil uses this particle in far more limited cases, and it is completely optional in standard cases of cleft constructions. These standard, or more common cases of cleft constructions are the AF, clefting of full NP patients of transitives, subjects of intransitives, and locatives. Below are examples of standard clefts in Ixil.

19. Common clefts
a) Lexical patient of transitive cleft
(A) *u q-aq'om* *va* *kat=ku-b'an*
(F_{cop}.3Abs) def. 1pErg.-WORK comp. compl.=1pErg.-DO.3Abs.
'It is our work that we do'

b) Subject of intransitive cleft

(A)=*in* *kat=vat=in-e'*
Fcop.=1sAbs. compl.=SLEEP=1pAbs.-enc.
'It was me who slept.'

c) Locative focus cleft

(A) *tzitzi* *kat=itzeb-kat=in*
Fcop.3Abs. THERE compl.=be.born-lf.=1sAbs.
'It was there that I was born"

Non-standard clefts seem to prefer the use of the clefting particle *a*. Non-standard clefts of these sorts include clefting of adjuncts and non-lexicalized transitive patients. Below are a couple of examples of non-standard clefts in Ixil.

20. 'Non-standard' clefts

a) Non-lexical patient of transitive cleft

A =kuxh-e' *nu-ku-b'an=Ø-e'*
F_{cop}.3Abs.=ONLY-enc. incom.-1pErg.-DO=3Abs.-enc.
'It is just this that we did'

b) Adjunct cleft

A *e ta* *ve* *el-vet-chul=o'*
F_{cop} .3Abs. FOR THIS comp. LEAVE-ALREADY-dir.=1pAbs.

su ku-kayil
1pErg.-ALL
'That is why we all left' or 'It is for this reason that we all left'

`

c) Instrument cleft

A=kuxh *tuk asaron-e'*
F_{cop} .3Abs.=ONLY WITH HOE-enc.

nu-ku-b'an = vet=chaj
incom.-1pErg.-DO.3Abs.=ALREADY= rep.
'It is with hoes that we continually do (work)'

The important aspects of these examples is that the $F_{cop.}$ *a* is optional in most standard cases. It only seems preferred in cases of complex fronted phrases to further ensure that the listener places the contrast focus on the proper constituent, following Lambrecht's (2001) principle 2, presented above. Further, notice that the adverb *kuxh*

[only] (20a) is allowed in the fronted constituent and does not fall on the subordinate verb. Adverbs like *only* are focus-sensitive (Rooth 1992), and therefore just take scope over the local focus reading. In Ixil, *kuxh* [only] will attach to the focal constituent, taking scope over it, and only it. This should be taken as further evidence that the fronted constituent is a separate clause.

Further, the evidence from negation in AF constructions in Awaketeko (c.f. example 12) is extended here in these cleft constructions. Specifically, in Ixil the stative negative *jit* is used to negate the fronted constituent and not the verbal negative *ye'l*, as in:

21. Negated AF

a) Grammatical AF with stative negative

Jit	*in*	*kat=vat=in-e'*
sta.neg/neg.	1sAbs.	compl.=SLEEP=1sAbs.-enc.

'It was not me who slept.'

b) Ungrammatical AF with verbal negative

**Ye'l*	*in*	*kat=vat=in-e'*
Neg.	1sAbs.	compl.=SLEEP=1sAbs.-enc.

c) Grammatical example of verbal negative in active direct sentence

Ye'l	*kat=un-loch*	*ma'l*	*chiik-e'*
Neg.	compl.-1sErg.-BUY	indef.	skirt-enc.

'I didn't buy a skirt'

These facts, especially in addition to the dependent aspect used in AF contexts in Ixil's sister language, Mam; all suggest a bi-clausal analysis. I remind the reader of the Mam AF example reproduced here:

22. Agent-focus cleft construction in Mam (England, 1983a)

aa	*qiin-a*	*xhin*	*juusa-n-a*	*t-e*	*chib'aj*
F_{cop}	1sAbs.	dep.aspect.1sAbs	BURN-ap-1s.	3sErg.-RN	FOOD

'It was I who burned the food'

As can be seen in the Mam example above the morpheme *–on* has, in a lot of the languages, a pure antipassive-absolutive voice reduction role, even in AF constructions. This is to say that the original transitive verb is de-transitivised when *–on* is attached to it and the absolutive, which is normally reserved for the patient, cross-references the agent, leaving the patient to be expressed by an oblique phrase, or not at all. Interestingly, Ixil uses the same morpheme *–on* for both the AF and the antipassive. Below is an example of this contrast in Ixil:

23. Difference between the AF and the absolutive-antipassive in Ixil.

a) Absolutive antipassive

Kat=loch-on=axh	*(sve)*
compl.=HELP-ap.=2sAbs.	(RN#1.1sErg.)
'You helped (me)'	

b) AF

Axh	*kat=loch-on=in*
2sAbs.	compl.=HELP-af.=1sAbs.
'It is you who helped me'	

Notice that there is a difference between the two usages in Ixil. Namely, the antipassive demotes the patient to an oblique role, and promotes the agent to an absolutive role. The role of the anitpassive in Ixil discourse is not as clear to me. I have far fewer examples of the antipassive in my texts, but it is typically used when the patient is understood through context, and is thus recoverable. I will not discuss the antipassive in the context of this paper. It will be relevant later in one discourse example, it is therefore important to note here.

4.2 The AF cleft construction

The work of Smith-Stark (1978) reconstructs the morpheme *–*(V)n* in Proto-Maya, showing it to be originally designed to handle an agentive (his term for AF) role, with

a clear valence reducing function. It was used when the agent is extracted for questioning, relativization, or focus. According to Smith-Stark the AF was restricted to disambiguating third person arguments, the patient was realized in a non-oblique role, and the agreement, in contrast to the AF construction in Ixil, is controlled by the agent of the verb. Dayley (1981) and Stiebals (2006) suggests that the original AF construction *-*(V)n* cross-referenced the object as is the case in Ixil. Stiebals also suggests that the original function was to disambiguate two third person arguments. As stated earlier, this analysis fits the data well in Tzotzil (Aissen, 1999) and Kaqchikel (Broadwell, 2000). This analysis clearly does not apply to Ixil as the construction in Ixil is not limited to third-persons. Davies and Sam-Colop (1990) analyze the K'ichee' AF construction and give a Relational Grammar account of the unusual marking system in this language, relying on an analogy to the unaccusativity hypothesis. The facts in K'ichee also do not fit the Ixil case as the AF marked verb in K'ichee agrees with the speech-act participant regardless of thematic role (agent/patient)[14]. Tonhauser (2003, 2005, 2007) has discussed relevant data in Yucatec, and shows Yucatec to use bi-clausal syntax to express the transitive relation of the AF event. I will suggest an analysis of the AF in Ixil that is similar to Tonhauser's (2003, 2007) but will focus on formalizing the AF in LFG, as well as establishing the functional and grammatical reasons for the construction via information-structure correlates of focus-presupposition articulations of Lambrecht (1992, 2001). First, I want to show the empirical facts concerning the distributions of the AF.

[14] In the case where both referents are speech act participants, the verb agrees with the first-person referent.

4.2.1 The AF in Ixil

24. Ixil Agent-Focus cleft construction

a)

In	*kat=tzok-**on***	*u*	*si'-e'*
1sAbs.	compl.=CUT-**af**.3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'It is I who cut the wood.'

b)

***In**	*kat=un-tzok-**on***	*u*	*si'-e'*
1sAbs.	compl.=1sErg-CUT-**af**. 3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'Ungrammatical with ergative marking on subordinate verb.

c)

***Kat=tzok-on**	*in*	*u*	*si'-e'*
compl.=CUT-**af**. 3Abs.	1sAbs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

Ungrammatical if agent follows verb in its active-direct agent position.

Example 9a-c shows some of the grammatical characteristics of the construction. Generally, the AF construction fronts the agent, whether a full third-person lexical mention, or an independent pronoun/absolutive for non-third person participants; and marks the subordinate verb with the morpheme *–on*. The AF verb is marked with an absolutive that cross-references the original patient. There are four primary environments where the agent-focus construction is used: content-agent questions, relative clauses, focus constructions and negative-contrast constructions. The agent-focus is common in situations where the agent of a transitive predicate is questioned, as in the following:

25. Content-agent question-answer pair

Question:

a)

*Ab'il kat=loq'-**on***	*u*	*chik-e'?*
WHO compl.=BUY-**af**.3Abs.		def. SKIRT-enc.

'Who bought the skirt?'

***b) Ungrammatical question with Q-word in subject slot**

*Kat=loq'-**on***	*ab'il*	*u*	*chik-e'?*
compl.=BUY-**af**.3Abs.	WHO	def.	SKIRT-enc.

Answer

a) Felicitous answer with agent-focus

Axh	*kat=loq'-**on***	*u*	*chik-e'?*
2sAbs.	compl.=BUY-**af**. 3Abs.	def.	SKIRT-enc.

'It is you who bought the skirt.'

b) Infelicitous answer with active-direct morphology

#Kat=a-loq'	*u*	*chik-e'?*
compl.=2Erg-BUY.3Abs.	def.	SKIRT-enc.

'You bought the skirt.'

Notice that the construction fronts the question word *who*, which is the unpredictable element. There is no ergative agreement with the fronted element. Ungrammaticality results if the question word is left in the agent slot of the VSO paradigm. The absolutive on the subordinate verb is cross-referencing the patient argument, like all agent-focus constructions in Ixil.

The AF construction is commonly used in what appears to be relative clauses, when the agent is the head of the construction. This is shown in the following:

26. Relative clauses

a. *ab'il*	*ni-b'an-**on***
who	incomp.3Erg.-DO-**af**.3sAbs.

‘who was it that did it?

b. *b’an-on* *A* *kuxhtu* *unq’a* *muus-e’*
compl.DO-ap3Abs $F_{cop.}$3Abs. ONLY some LADINOS-top.
It was the ladinos

c. *xoovi-sa-**n*** *unq’a* *ku-b’aal-e’*
compl.=SCARE-caus.-**af**.3sAbs. some 3sErg.-FATHER-top.
‘who scared our fathers’

Finally, the construction is used when there is contrastive focus on the agent of a transitive verb. This is usually found in negative contexts, such as *It wasn’t John who bought the skirt, it was*…as in the following:

27. AF with negative focus.

Jit *Xhun* *kat=loq’-**on*** *u chiik.*
Sta.neg. John compl.=DO-**af**.3Abs def. SKIRT
‘It’s wasn’t John who bought the skirt’

It is clear from the examples that the absolutive on the subordinate verb is cross-referencing the patient argument, and the focused agent element has no clear relation to the verb in terms the normal co-reference paradigm of Mayan languages. That is to say that it does not control an ergative relation to the verb. In all cases the *–on* morpheme is attached to the verb in an immediate post-stem position in the verbal complex. Also, as alluded to earlier the AF takes the stative negative *jit* instead of the verbal negative *ye’l*.

Another empirical fact worth mentioning is that the subordinate clause can take all available aspects in Ixil, as shown here:

28. Available aspects in the AF cleft constructions
a) Completive
In *kat=tzok-**on*** *u* *si’-e’*
1sAbs. compl.=CUT-**af**.3Abs. def. FIREWOOD-enc.
‘It is I who cut the wood’

b) Incompletive

In	*ni=tzok-**on***	*u*	*si'-e'*
1sAbs.	incomp.=CUT-**af**.3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'It is I who is cutting the wood'

c) Potential

In	*la=tzok-**on***	*u*	*si'-e'*
1sAbs.	compl.=CUT-**af**.3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'It is I who will/can cut the wood'

d) Inceptive

In	*tuk=tzok-**on***	*u*	*si'-e'*
1sAbs.	incep.=CUT-**af**. 3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'It is I who is about to cut the wood'

Another fact of the AF construction is that the split ergative pattern (conditioned by aspect) in ergative marking does not apply to the AF-verb. That is, an ergative marker does not appear on an AF-verb with imperfect aspect, as is usually the case for intransitive predicates.

29. AF-construction with imperfect aspect

a)

Axh	*ni=loch-**on**=in*
2sAbs.	incom.=HELP-**af**.=1sAbs.

'It is you who is helping me.'

***b)**

Axh	*nun=loch-**on***
2sAbs.	imp.1sErg.=HELP-**af**.

'It is you who is helping me.'

Tonhauser (2007) has considered the fact that the normal intransitive split-ergative paradigm does not apply to the AF-verb to be evidence for the transitive (syntactic) nature of the verb. I agree with this stance, as I will be proposing the AF verb to be syntactically transitive, despite its morphological intransitivity.

So far I have not shown the AF construction expressed with the F_{cop} *a*. As stated before, the F_{cop} is optional and usually not used in more standard cases. However, in the case of complex fronted agents the F_{cop} is used to ensure a proper focal reading over the agent. Notice in the following example that the agent is complex: a possessed noun

30. Complex agent in AF constructions

a)

A	*un-txutxe'*	*kat=loch-**on**=in*
$F_{cop.}$ 3Abs.	1sErg.-MOTHER	compl.=HELP-**af**=1sAbs.

'It was my mother that helped me'

b)

A	*minesterio publico*	*ni-b'an-**on***	*autorizar*
$F_{cop.}$ 3Abs.	PUBLIC MINISTRY	incom.-DO-**af**.3Abs.	AUTHORIZATION

'It is the public ministry that authorize them [exhumations of clandestine graves].'

The last remarkable distributional fact of the AF construction centers on the usage of reflexives in the Ixil AF construction. Reflexive clauses in Ixil are syntactically transitive. In reflexive clauses there is co-reference between agent and reflexive patient. Like all Mayan languages, the anaphor in Ixil is a possessed noun that functions as the direct object. This is called the relational noun in Mayan languages, and is used to mark oblique arguments as well. Examples of reflexive clauses are given here:

31. Reflexive clause in Ixil active-direct voice.

As	*Ø=ku-k'ul*	*q'-ib*	*ti u aq'on-e'*
and	comp.=1sErg.-GATHER.3Abs.	1pErg.-RN#2	for def.WORK-enc.

'And we gathered ourselves for work'

32. Reflexive clause in Ixil AF cleft.

In kuxhtu	*mol-**on***	*v-ib'*	*tuk ak*	*un-txutx-e'*
1sAbs. JUST	comp.HUDDLE-**af.**	1sErg.-RN#2	with ncl.	1sErg.MOM-enc.

'It was only me who huddled myself with my mom'

This suggests that the reflexive is locally controlled in its local domain. In terms of LFG this amounts to saying that the reflexive's binder is within its minimal functional domain (Bresnan, 2001; Dalrymple, 2001). The most remarkable observation concerning the reflexive in this context is that reflexives are bound by ergative-linked referents (England, personal communication). This suggests that the AF verb's functional domain includes an ergative type argument of some kind that includes all of the anaphoric information of the fronted and focused agent[15].

In summary, this section on the grammatical facts of the AF construction has shown primarily that the regular transitive relationship of ergative-absolutive marking on the verb is suspended in this construction, this is to say that the verb does not use its normal ergative pronoun to agree with the fronted agent. The AF uses two absolutive linked arguments to express a semantic transitive relation. Evidence from other languages, especially Ixil's sister language Mam (where dependent aspect is marked on the AF verb) suggest a subordinate analysis. This evidence, in addition to the distribution of negatives in cleft contexts and reflexives gives us good reason to analyze the AF as a proper cleft construction according to Lambrecht's (2001) analysis.

Thus far I have not discussed the reason for the absence of the ergative-absolutive pattern seen in the AF. To do so, we must look at the construction in discourse, as well as understand the nature of discourse (Du Bois, 1987) and syntactic (Dayley, 1981; Dixon, 1994, England, 1983) ergativity. Specifically, in the next section I will

[15] Actually, as will be seen, the fronted 'agent' is not an agent in the sense of Dixon (1994). Under my analysis it should be better considered a subject S of an intransitive, stative predicate. In the case of the AF the predicate is the F_{cop}.

quickly discuss the reasons behind the break in the ergative-absolutive pattern based on the nature of syntactic ergativity, and the role of the AF as a specificational cleft exhibiting contrast semantics and pragmatics. The AF function of ensuring a contrast-focus reading over the agent of a semantic transitive relationship in addition to the nature of syntactic ergativity in general forces a marked, bi-clausal construction. Following this discussion I will present some discourse data that demonstrates characteristics I have been discussing.

4.2.2 Ergative extraction

The description of the AF construction in Ixil hinges on the nature of transitivity in Mayan languages. While the notion of transitivity is considered an important property of all language and discourse (Hopper & Thompson, 1981), it is an especially interesting case in Mayan languages. It has been shown that Mayan verbs exhibit a fundamental morphological distinction between transitive and intransitive predicates (Dayley, 1981). Most Mayan verbs fundamentally mark the participants in the event, aspect, as well as the status (Kaufman, 1990) of the event. In Mayan languages there is no case marked on nominal arguments. The main way to mark the transitive relation is through the ergative and absolutive marking on the verb. Any verb without one or the other is likely intransitive. This characteristic defines the main way valence is expressed by Ixil predicates.

Syntactic ergativity, where the agent of a transitive predicate is treated as marked in syntactic operations, is present in at least some of the Mayan languages. Syntactic ergativity is present when special status is given to the fundamental term *agent*. Dayley (1981:10) states:

> A language has syntactic ergativity if there are syntactic processes which rely on ergative structures for their operation. In other words, ergative structures feed syntactic processes like coordination, subordination, relativization, etc., rather than accusative structures.

If the ergative member is restricted syntactically, as it is in the AF, then the language has characteristics of syntactic ergativity[16]. Anaphoric, syntactic control is one of the situations where we can expect syntactic ergativity. Ixil exhibits syntactic ergativity in AF contexts where the dependent clause is restricted from exhibiting ergative linked arguments. The ergative nature of Mayan syntax in cases of subordination and relativization at least partially explains the lack of a lexicalized ergative-linked argument in Ixil AF contexts. The explanation depends upon the discourse and pragmatic function of AF as a specificational cleft. The AF construction's unique function in discourse as a specificational cleft, as well as other information structure correlates as *preferred argument structure*[17] (Du Bois, 1987a; England & Martin; 2003) have an effect on the syntax of Ixil.

4.3 The agent-focus construction in Ixil discourse

My first example comes from a monologue discourse about the genocide committed against the indigenous population of Guatemala during the early eighties. The speaker, a local refugee leader during those times, is me and my colleague about what happened during those years. Specifically, where the following discourse is taken from, the speaker is discussing the extreme famine they endured, due to the

[16] This fact will motivate the change I make to the architecture of LFG. Namely I substitute the grammatical relations SUBJect and OBJect with the relations ERGative, and ABSolutive.
[17] I will not have space to discuss these papers. The main reason for mentioning these papers is their point that clauses prefer regular ways to express their arguments. This includes: limiting a clause to one new discourse referent per clause, avoiding lexical mentions of agents, avoiding more than one lexical argument per clause, and avoiding new agents. These constraints on natural discourse ensure an ergative structure of discourse. That is allowing only subjects of intransitives and patients of transitives to introduce new information. Agent slots are left for already introduced referents.

government's meticulous destruction of local food supplies and corn fields. The DT is *What happened during the violence?*. It is a general monologue about the events in the area, and more specifically what the army did to ensure total eradication of food, family and shelter.

33.

a) *tan tiixh b'aaj ti unqa internacional*
'Thank God for the internacionals,'

b) *as tan tiixh tu Tiixh*
'and thanks be to God,'

c) *va* *kat=kay=in*
comp. compl.=STAY-1sAbs.
'that I lived'

d) *tan* *un-b'aal* *kat=kam-i'*
because 1sErg.-FATHER compl.=DIE-sta.
'because my father died'

e) *Ø=kam* *un-b'aal* *tu vaay*
compl.=DIE.3Abs. 1sErg.-FATHER from STARVATION
'He died from starvation'

f) *un-txutx, pues,* *txom* *kat=b'an-on*
1sErg.-MOM, well, SICKNESS compl.=DO-af.3Abs.
'As for my mom, well, it was sickness that did it'

g) *pero un-b'aal* *vaay* *kat=yatz-on* *un-b'aal-e'*
but 1sErg-DAD STARVATION compl.=KILL-af.3Abs. 1sErg-DAD-enc.
'But as for my Dad, it was starvation that killed my father'.

As we can see from the above examples the extended DT, in this case *what the army did* or perhaps *What happened during the genocide*, is not a referable entity. That is, it is not a person, or any object that can be suppressed, in the sense of only being referred to anaphorically. Given Tonhauser's (2003, 2007) analyses we would assume that the DT is either the speaker's father or mother, as they are the ones appearing in the subordinated clauses. Rather, the subordinate clauses are simple

local presuppositional phrases. The agents-in-focus (sickness and starvation) are placed there to ensure that the listener knows there are choices, in this unfortunate case, other ways they could have died[18]. In other words they are focal. This is the case in line g, regardless of the fact that hunger had been mentioned before. The pertinent issue is the fact that there are options available, that is, the agent is an option selected from a contextually constrained set (Rooth, 1992). In fact a few lines before they discuss other 'agents' that killed people during the violence (specifically bullets and bombs).

My next example clearly shows the AF construction's function of providing alternatives to the agency. Specifically, the AF construction in the following example is a rhetorical question not meant to be answered, but to bring up a set of options, in this case an unresolved set:

34.

a)	*Tan*	*ye'*	*vet*	*un-puaj*	*at-i'*
	That's why	neg.	already	1sErg.-MONEY	EXIST-sta.
	'That's why I didn't have any money'				

b)	*ye'*	*vet*	*un-puaj*	*at-i'*
	neg.	already	1sErg.-MONEY	EXIST.3Abs-sta.
	'I didn't have any money'			

c)	*tan*	*ye'*	*vet*	*un-tz'umel*
	also	neg.	already	1sErg.-HUSBAND
	'nor a husband'			

[18] The examples I will use in this paper follow the general theme of the one just presented. I choose these morbid themes partly because my text are centered around them; but also to inform people who might not understand the severity of the situation in Guatemala in the eighties (and to some extent currently). Please see Sanford (2003) for more information on the governmental genocide committed in the area.

d) *ab'il=chaj* *tuk=vej-on=vet=in*
Who=3Ind.pl. incep.=ADORN-af.=already=1sAbs.
'Who is going to buy me clothes', lit: 'Who is going to dress me'

In the following extended example we see two agent-focus constructions. This is another monologic excerpt; this one is discussing the lack of education in the area around Nebaj, and who is at fault (e.g., the non-indigenous upper class *ladinos*). The DT in this example would have to be the *ladinos* themselves.

35.

a) *"yexh kam* *n=i-tx'ol* *tz'ib'*
noboby imper.=3Erg.-ABLE WRITE
'"Nobody can write"

b) *Ø-ta* *unq'a* *internacional*
compl.-SAY some internationals
the internationals say,

c) *ni-tal* *sq-i*
incom.3Erg-SAY 1pErg. RN#1
they told us

d) *pero kam sti qi,?*
but why,
But why?

e) *ab'il ni-b'an-on*
who imper.3Erg.-DO-on.3Abs.
who was it that did it?

f) *Ø=b'an-on* *anxtu* *unq'a muus-e'*
comp.=DO-ap.3Abs some LADINOS-enc.

It was the ladinos

g) *Ø=xoovi-sa-n* *unq'a* *ku-b'aal-e'*
com.=SCARE-caus.-af.3Abs. some 1pErg.-FATHER-enc.
who scared our fathers.'

Here the DT (ladinos) is being relativized in AF construction (lines f & g) and once is even selected by the antipassive verb *b'anon* [do]; and the scaring of elders is the presupposed event and argument. This event (the government/ladinos scaring the indigenous population away from school and into the fields) was discussed thirty seconds before setting up the rhetorical question in line e. We see that the DT is not suppressed, and is in fact made focal in the AF construction. The constructions are used to specify the culpability of the government/upper class as opposed to others. The pertinent issue does not seem to be the DT itself; rather, it seems like more local issues of focus-presupposition. Again, in the above example, the focused agent is specified from a contextual set of possibilities; acknowledging the possibility of others, yet ensuring that those others are not specified. In my texts about the genocide, there are many instances of assignment of culpability. This is a prime context to find the AF construction, as the next example shows. It is a text about why people died during genocide:

36.

a) *Ye'l t-ootzi* *kamsti* *kat=kan=kat*
neg. 3Erg.-KNOW WHY compl.=STAY=lf.3Abs.
'They [family members of the dead] didn't know why they laid there dead'

b) *Ye'l u kamnaje'* *at-koj=kuxh* *kat=kam-i* *ti* *qayil*
neg. def. DEAD EXIST-irr.=ONLY compl.DIE-sta. from LAZYNESS
'It's not like the dead died from lazyness'

c) *ye'l* *ni-sa* *aqon*

neg. incom.3Erg.-DESIRE WORK
'or they didn't want to work'

d) *Sino que puro* *chaoj* *kat=yatz-on* *u tenam-e'*
Rather pure WAR compl.-KILL-af.3Abs. def. PEOPLE-enc.
'rather it was just the war that killed the people'

e) *pero u sol-e'* *kat=b'an-on*
but def. SOLDIER compl.=DO-af.3Abs.
'Rather it was the soldiers who did it'

Here the contrast semantics is clear. The assignment of culpability inherently suggests a situation where there is a potential set of agents, and narrowing down that set to ensure that the guilty party is selected.

My final example will highlight this focal/specificational function of the AF, as well as show regular transitive predicates that do not have the specificational role. This example compares the different usages of the same predicate *yatz* [kill] in both active-direct and AF contexts.

37.

a) *porque tan como* *ni-yatz=vet=o'* *chanaj*
because incom.3Erg.-KILL=already=1pAbs. 3pInd.m
'because they were killing us'

b) *kayil=vet=o'*
all=already=1pAbs.
'all of us'

c) *ni-yatz=vet=o'* *chanaj*
incom.3Erg.-KILL=already=1pAbs. 3pInd.m
'they were killing us'

d) *pero lo que* *ve* *ni-tal* *chanaj* *sq'i-e'*
but it was comp. incom-3Erg.SAY 3pInd.m RN#1.1pErg.-enc.
'but they were saying to us'

e) *ve sq'ib* *tan como* *o'=guerrilleros*
comp. RN#1.1sErg. because 1sAbs.=GUERILLAS
'that we are the gorillas'

f) *chi* *ve* *ni-tal* *chajnaj*
say comp. incom.-3Erg.SAY 3pInd.
'That is what they were saying'

g) *que ve* *ni-tal* *chanaj ex-e'* *ve* *ex guerrilleros*
comp. incom.3Erg-SAY 3pInd. 2pAbs-enc. comp. 2pAbs. GUERILLAS
'they were saying that 'its y'all, y'all are the guerillas'

h) *ex-e'* *ve* *ni-yatz-on=o'*
2pAbs.-enc. comp. incom.-KILL-af.=1pAbs.
'"It is y'all who are killing us"'

This extended example show the same verb *yatz* [kill] used three times. Twice it is used in the active-direct voice (lines a & c) , and once in an AF construction (line h). The question is why the more marked version (AF) is usedin line h. According to what I have been stating in this section, it has to do with the information structure partitions. Namely, the first two examples follow a neutral pattern, where the transitive agent is topical (both DT and local) and the locally new focal information is entailed by the verb *yatz* [kill] and its patient argument. In the case of the AF *yatzon* in line h, the agent alone is focal. It is known, in the pragmatic context of the reported speech, that the rebel army had been fighting the army, and consequently incurring casualties. The AF construction is used to ensure that a focal reading is partitioned over the agents (y'all [the refugees]). That is, the AF construction marks the fact that there are options in line h, but the only relevant option is the one specified. This is not the case in the regular transitive verbs (a & c).

The structure of focus in Mayan languages in general suggests a cleft-like structure, which excludes a transitive relation in terms of the ergative-absolutive marking system. In order to express a transitive relation when the agent is in focus,

the agent must be 'extracted' into another clause. This follows from Lambrecht's (1994, 2001) taxonomy of focus-presupposition articulations. Regular, default predicative articulations are called predicate-foci. These are by far the most frequent, and unmarked types of focus-presupposition articulations. In Ixil this places the focal partition on the predicate, which is the most unmarked way to package information. In the next section I will use the descriptive facts that I have presented above and incorporate them into LFG formalism. The purpose is not to provide a pan-Mayan account of the AF construction, rather simply use LFG to provide a formalism of the facts laid out above.

5.0 An LFG analysis of the Ixil AF construction
5.1 Basic Structures

The most basic structure in Ixil syntax is the stative predication. This simple structure requires a predicate stative head and a nominal argument following the head. The nominal argument is linked to the predicate via absolutive agreement/pronouns. I show one here, followed by a stative with a first person subject for comparison:

38. Stative predicates

a) Stative with lexical nominal argument

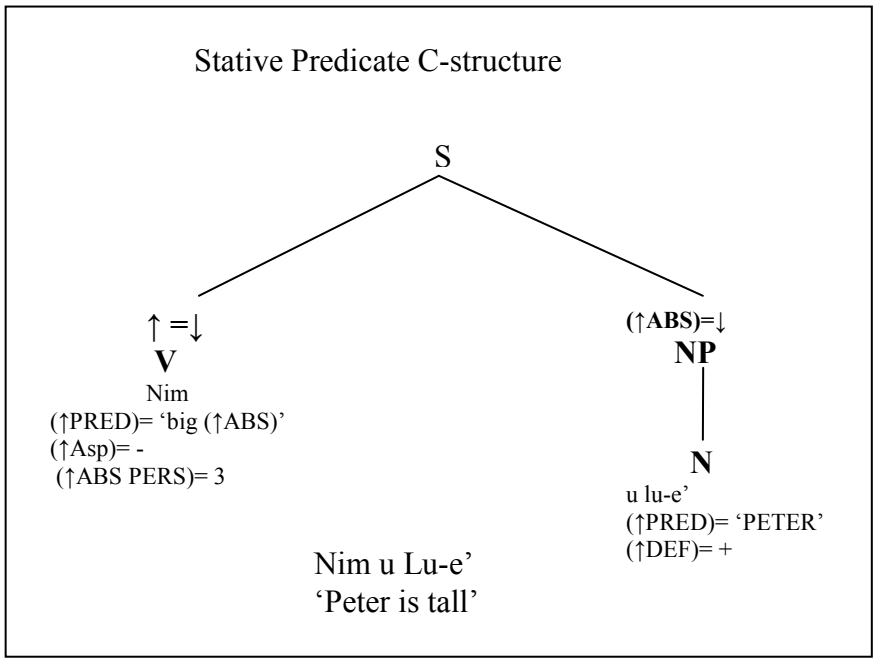
Nim=Ø *u Lu-e'*
BIG=3Abs. def. PETER-enc.
'Peter is big/tall'

b) Stative with absolutive pronoun

Nim=in
BIG=1sAbs.
'I am big/tall'

To account for these simple structures I will propose an excocentric category S. Following the short description of syntactic ergativity in Ixil, I will assume that the syntax is not sensitive to the categories SUBJ and OBJ, rather I will propose that the syntax is sensitive to the categories ERG (ergative) and ABS (absolutive). Ixil, especially in AF contexts, shows ergative characteristics, I feel therefore that the formalism I use should reflect this. Changing the grammatical relations to ERG and ABS changes none of the formal computational power of the formalism, and allows us to explain ergative processes in Ixil's syntax like the AF. We can propose the tree given here for the stative given in the example above[19]:

[19] I will not go into the structure of NPs in this paper. My trees do not show their internal structure.



This tree assumes that the stative marked with a third person absolutive marker carries the person features (and number in 1st and 2nd person contexts). The stative *nim* has the following for its lexical entry:

Nim	stat.	(↑PRED)= 'big <↑ABS>'
		(↑Asp)= -
		((↑ABS PRED)= 'pro')
		(↑ABS PERS)= 3

This gives us the following simple f-structure:

| Pred	'Big <↑ABS>'			|
| Aspect	-			|
| ABS	| PRED	'Peter'	|	|
|	|PERS	3	|	|
|	|DEF +		|	|

We can assume this basic c-structure rule to produce the structure above, following Bresnan (2001), I assume all nodes are optional:

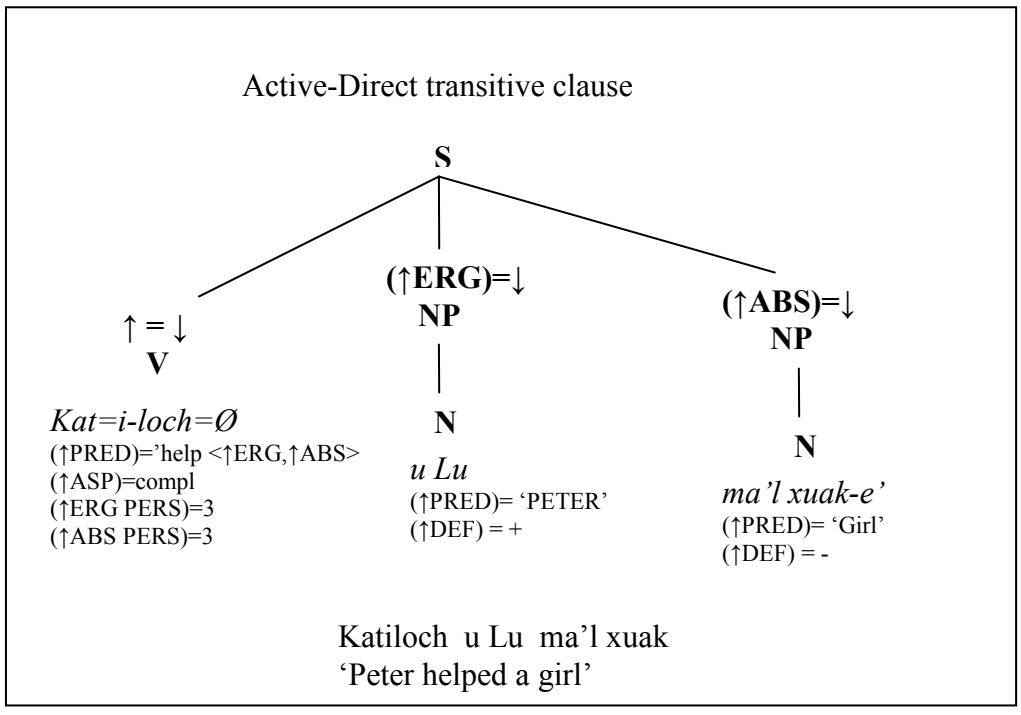
S → V NP
(↑ABS)=↓

The next basic structure to be discussed is the VSO active-direct sentence structure in Ixil. Following Broadwell (2000) I will assume a flat, basic VSO structure, in an exocentric tree structure. The argument for this is simply that no other word order is allowed in active-direct contexts. Below is an example of an active direct sentence, followed by the syntactic tree, f-structure, and lexical entry.

39. Active-direct sentence

Kat=i-loch=Ø	*u Lu*	*ma'l xuak-e'*
compl.=3Erg.-HELP=3Abs.	def. PETER	indef. GIRL-enc.

'Peter helped the girl'



I propose the following lexical entry for the verb *katiloch=Ø*

Kat=i-loch=Ø V (↑PRED)='help <(↑ ERG),(↑ABS)>
(↑ASP)=compl
(↑ERG PERS)=3

(↑ABS PERS)=3
((↑ERG PRED)= ‘pro’)
((↑ABS PRED)= ‘pro’)

This will give us the f-structure shown here:

|PRED	‘Help <(↑ERG),(↑ABS)>		|
|ASP	compl		|
|			|
|ERG	|PRED	‘Peter’ |	|
|	|Def	+ |	|
|	|PER	3 |	|
|			|
|ABS	|PRED	‘Girl’ |	|
|	|Def	- |	|
|	|PER	3 |	|

Expanding our c-structure rules gives us the following list:

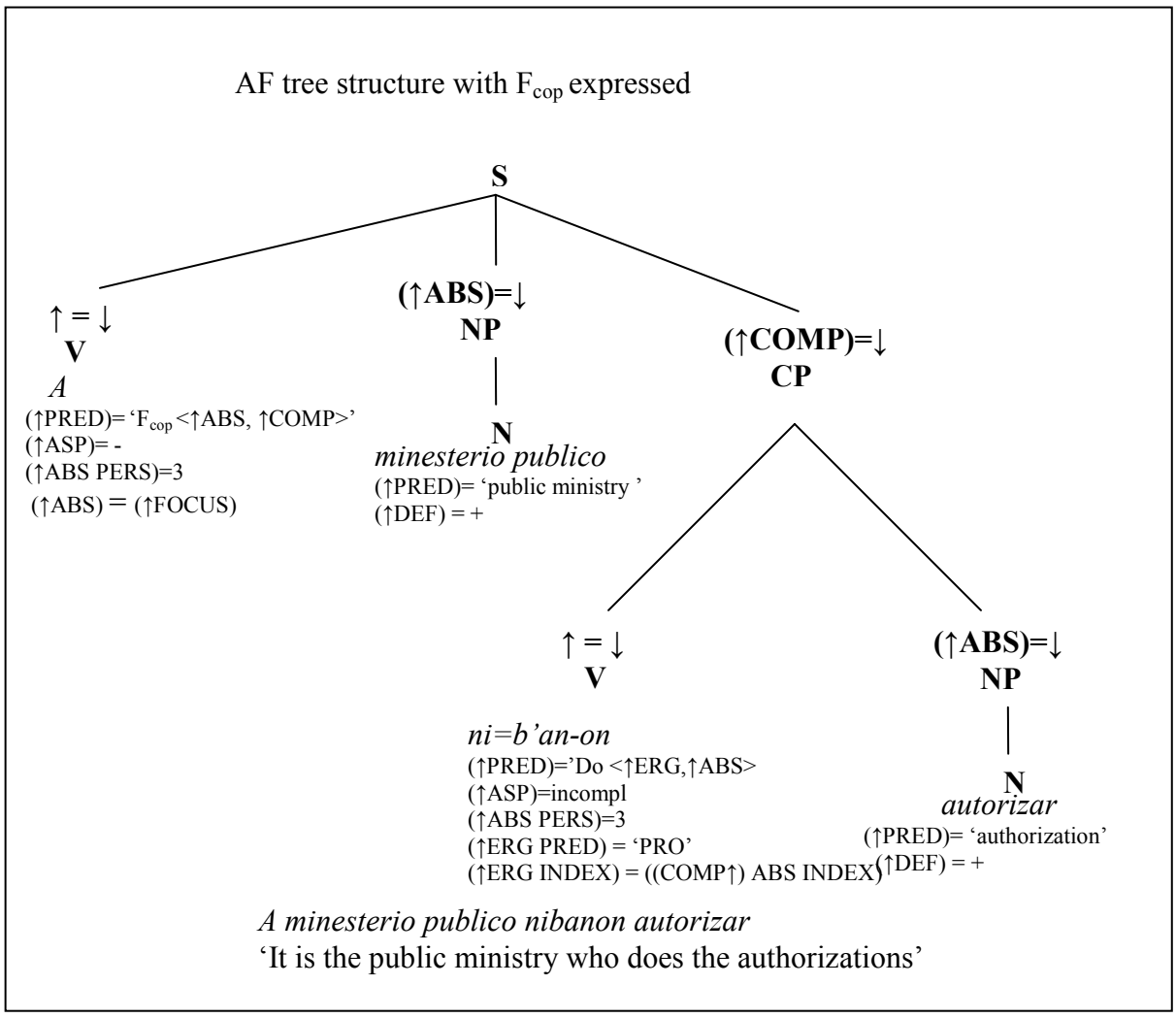
S →	V	NP	NP
		(↑ERG)=↓	(↑ABS)=↓

To account for an AF cleft construction with an F_{cop} present we have to insert a few new rules and, more specifically some construction specific equations that are specifically designed to handle the control situation set up between the ABS argument of the F_{cop} and the ERG argument of the COMP clause transitive predicate. Below is an example of an AF with an F_{cop} present:

40.

A	*ministerio publico*	*ni-b’an-**on***	*autorizar*
$F_{cop.}$ 3Abs.	PUBLIC MINISTRY	incom.-DO-**af**.3Abs.	AUTHORIZATION

‘It is the public ministry that authorize them [exhumations of clandestine graves].’



In the above tree I have introduced a couple of equations for the F_{cop} *a*, as well as added a complement clause in its subcategory frame. Adding the COMP to the subcategory frame of the F_{cop} is justified by the fact that the F_{cop} is always accompanied by a subordinate finite clause, rather than an infinitive-like XCOMP. The ERG argument of the complement verb gets its reference through obligatory anaphoric control. It is a case of anaphoric control rather than functional control because f-structures of the ABS and ERG are not the same[20]. Functional control

[20] Please see appendix for an extended discussion of this claim with data from Icelandic.

would put the ERG f-structure of the subordinate clause into the FOCUS f-structure, an undesirable result especially since ergative 'case' is not maintained.

In the AF there is also an equation that ensures that the FOCUS is associated with the F_{cop}'s ABS argument as well. I assume that the subordinate verb has a different lexical entry than that of a regular transitive verb. Specifically, the morpheme *–on* replaces equations that write information about person and number of the ERG argument with the equation (↑ERG PRED)= 'PRO', as well as the inside out equation (↑ERG INDEX)=((COMP ↑)ABS) INDEX) which ensures an anaphoric control between the subordinate ERG argument and the ABS arguemt of the matrix F_{cop}. Here are the relevant lexical entries:

A	F_{cop}	(↑PRED)= 'F_{cop} <↑ABS, ↑COMP> (↑ASP) = - (↑ABS PERS)= 3 ((↑ABS PRED) = 'pro') (↑ABS) = (↑FOCUS)
Nibanon=Ø	V	(↑PRED)= 'Do <↑ERG, ↑ABS>' (↑ASP)=incompl. (↑ABS PERS) = 3 ((↑ABS PRED) = 'pro') (↑ERG PRED) = 'PRO' (↑ERG INDEX) = ((COMP ↑) ABS) INDEX)

This will give us an f-structure that looks like the following:

PRED	‘F_{cop} <↑ABS,↑COMP>’	
ASP	-	
ABS		PRED ‘public ministry’	
	|DEF +	
	|INDEX i	
COMP	|PRED ‘DO <↑ERG,↑ABS>	
	|ASP incomp	
	|ERG |PRED ‘PRO’	
		|INDEX i	
	|ABS |PRED ‘authorize’	
		|DEF +	
FOCUS	|…|	

In order to handle this new addition, we have to change our c-structure rules to the following:

S →	V	NP	NP	CP
		(↑ERG)=↓	(↑ABS)=↓	(↑COMP)=↓

CP→ C S

In order to capture the more regular instances of AF construction that lack a formal expression of the F_{cop} *a* I will have to rely on data from Welsh cleft constructions that propose a hidden identity statement. In the next section I will quickly discuss the relevant data in Welsh and a possible application of the same concept in Ixil AF constructions.

5.2 Hidden identity statements in Welsh

Welsh is a VSO language that also expresses quirky subject agreement phenomenon in cleft constructions. In Welsh the subject follows either a verb or an auxiliary in finite clauses, as in:

41. Welsh finite clauses

(a) Subject after verb

Welodd Rhiannon ddraig
saw Rhiannon dragon
'Rhiannon saw a dragon.'

(b) Subject after auxiliary

Mae Rhiannon wedi gweld draig
is Rhiannon PERF see dragon
'Rhiannon has seen a dragon.'

An important point for our analysis is that finite verbs in Welsh agree with pronominal subjects that immediately follow the verb.

42. Welsh pronominal subject agreement

(a)	*weles*	*(i)*	**(d)**	*welon*	*(ni)*
	saw.1sg	I		saw.1pl	we
(b)	*welest*	*(ti)*	**(e)**	*weloch*	*(chi)*
	saw.2sg	you.sg		saw.2pl	you.pl
(c)	*welodd*	*(o)/(hi)*	**(f)**	*welon*	*(nhw)*
	saw.3sg	he/she		saw.3pl	they

As mentioned, the verb only agrees with a pronoun, and not a full lexical mention. Notice this in the following data:

43.

(a) *Welodd y bachgen/bechgyn*
saw.3sg the boy boys
'the boy/s saw'

(b) *****Welon y bechgyn*
saw.3pl the boys
'The boys saw'

In Welsh non-finite clauses, agreement occurs between the verb and a pronominal complement. The non-finite verb is preceded by an agreeing clitic, as shown in the following data:

44.

(a) *Naeth* *Emrys* *fy* *ngweld (i)*
did.3sg Emrys 1sg see I
'Emrys saw me'

(b) *Naeth* *Emrys* *eu* *ngweld (nhw)*
did.3sg Emrys 3pl see they
'Emrys saw them'

In Welsh cleft constructions there are comparable agreement oddities. First, there is no agreement between the focused subject and the verb (unlike in English clefts), as in:

45.

*Nhw welodd/ *welon ddafad*
They saw.3sg saw.3pl sheep
'It's they who saw a sheep'

The next relevant fact is in the context of cleft out of non-finite clauses. There is no agreement in these situations as well, as in the following:

46.

Fi mae *Gwyn wedi 'i* *ddweis/ *fy* *newis*
I be.PRES.3sg Gwyn PERF 3sg. choose/ 1sg choose
'It's me that Gwyn has choosen.'

In the example above the agreement clitic before the non-finite verb *ddweis* does not agree with its complement, rather a 3 person singular is found. To account for these agreement irregularities Borsley (ms) suggests that there is a hidden identity predicate associated with the fronted NP. Compare the example above to the following example where the predication is present [in brackets]:

47.

[*Fi ydy'r un*] *mae* *Gwyn wedi 'i* *ddweis*
I be one be.PRES.3sg Gwyn PERF 3sg. choose
'I am the one that Gwyn has chosen.'

These facts are strikingly similar to the facts in Ixil. Namely, the focus predicate (the F_{cop}) is optionally expressed in cleft constructions [ydy'r], and they both have agent agreement complexities. In English, we do not have this problem, as finite verbs agree with the subject, even in clefts, e.g. *It is the children who help/*helps Batman*. In Welsh and Ixil, we can propose a hidden focus predicate that assigns case to its argument directly, rather than from the place of extraction within the subordinate clause. This predicate is derived from an already existing focus predicate in the respective grammars of the languages.

5.3 The AF construction without the expression of a F_{cop}

Following the Welsh data somewhat, I am ready to propose an account of the AF construction without a formal expression of the F_{cop}. This analysis will follow the description of the AF above with changes allowing for a construction specific *hidden* predication equations associated with the constituent structure itself. Below is the relevant data that I will put into LFG formalism:

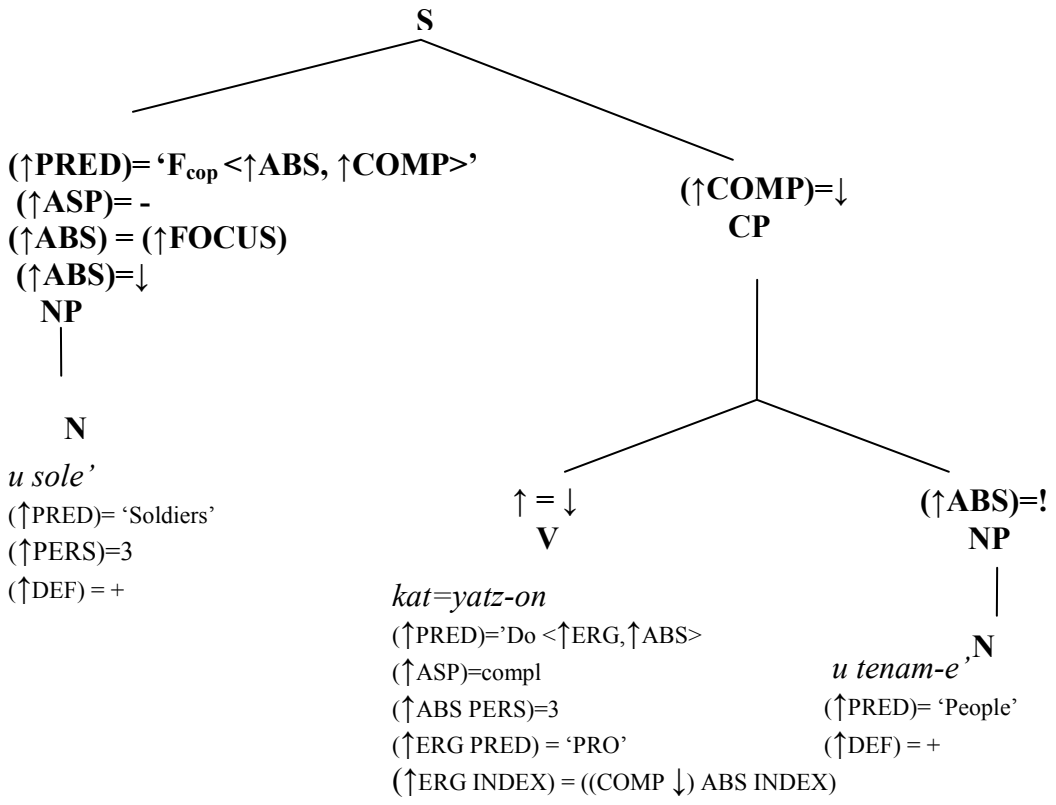
48. Ixil Agent-Focus construction without F_{cop}

U sol-e'	*kat=yatz-**on***	*u tenam-e'*
def. SOLDIERS-enc.	compl.-KILL-**af.**3Abs.	def. PEOPLE-enc.

'It was the soldiers that killed the people'

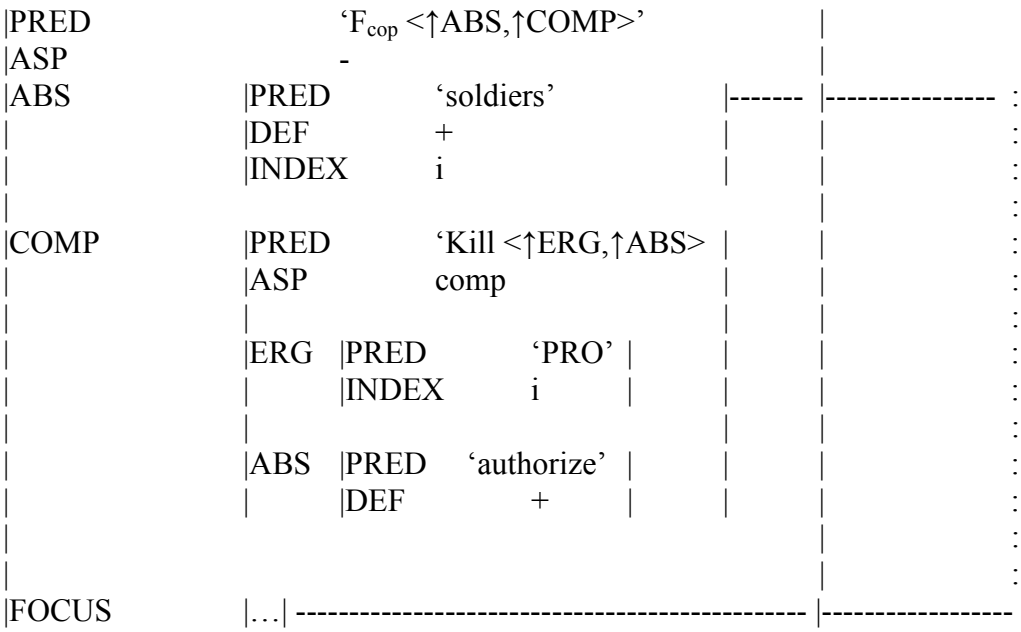
Simply put, the AF construction in these contexts moves the equations from the lexical entry of the F_{cop} presented in section 4.1 and associates them with the phrase structure itself. This is shown in the following tree:

AF tree structure with F_{cop} not expressed



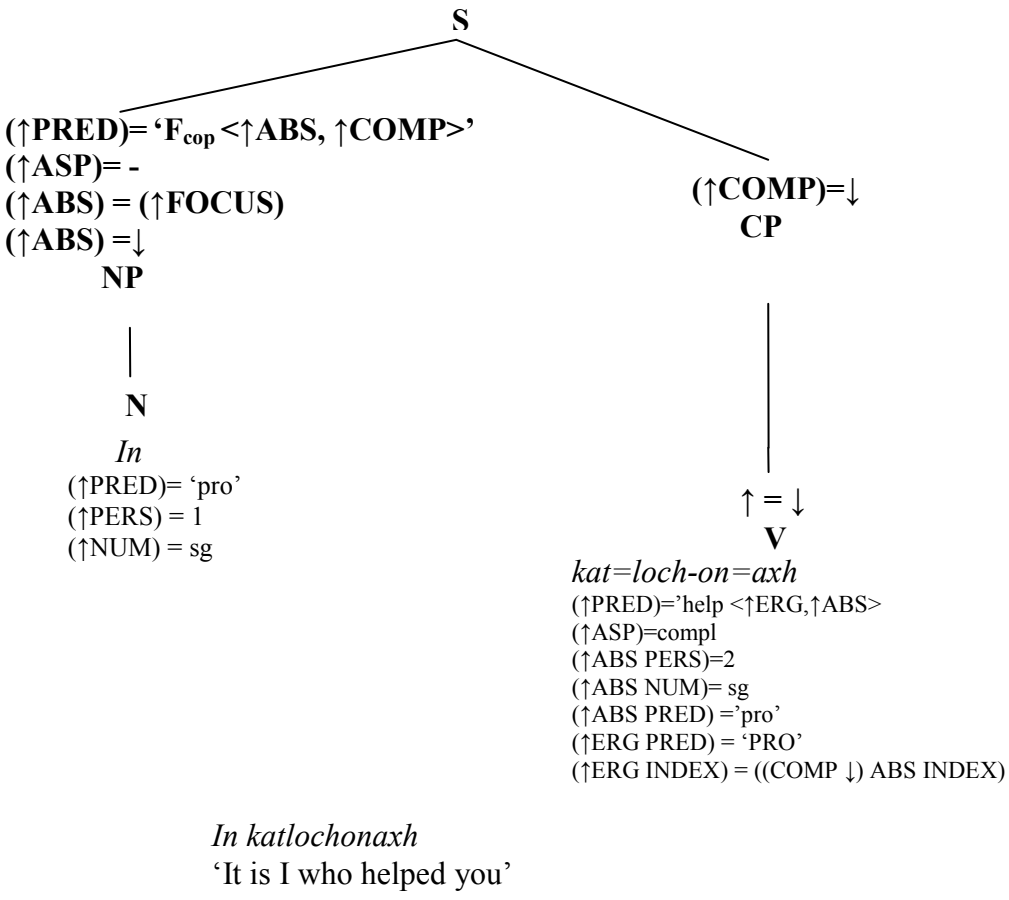
U sole' katyatzon u tename'.
'It was the soldiers who killed the people.'

I propose the following f-structrure for the tree above:



In order to give a fuller understanding of the AF construction I show an AF with a focused speech act participant. This following tree is the simplest, in the sense of fewest branches, that a AF construction can be. Specifically, since the verb carries the patient's information, and the focused agent is first person singular, there are no extra branches.

AF tree structure with a focused speech act participant



In katlochonaxh
'It is I who helped you'

This will produce an f-structure (below) that will look much like the other AF f-structures:

PRED	‘F_{cop} <↑ABS,↑COMP>’	
ASP	-	
ABS		PRED ‘pro’		-------		----------- : 	PERS 1			: 	NUM sg		
INDEX i			: |			: |			: |COMP	|PRED ‘Help <↑ERG,↑ABS>|		: | |ASP comp			: |				: | |ERG |PRED ‘PRO’				: |	|INDEX i				: |				: | |ABS |PRED ‘pro’				: |	|PERS 2				: |	|NUM sg				: |			: |			:
FOCUS	|…| ----------	|----------

Our c-structure rules will have to be adapted to these NP initial sentences. In order to characterize this I will put a disjunct between a verb and these types of NPs, as shown here:

S → V |NP NP NP CP
(↑PRED)= ‘F_{cop} <↑ABS, ↑COMP>’ ↑ERG=↓ ↑ABS=↓ ↑COMP=↓
(↓ASP)= (↑ASP)= -
(↑ABS) = (↑FOCUS)
(↑ABS)=↓

CP→ C S

The disjunction maintains the intuition that Ixil is a predicate initial language. Namely, since the NP itself carries a predicate with its maximal structure I would like to more closely associate it with the predicate position. In this way we also maintain the idea that there is something special about the focused noun, and the importance of the information primitive FOCUS on the predicate structure of Ixil.

This fronted NP also constitutes a place where the theory and data are a bit at odds. The fronted NP in these situations is expressed with an absolutive pronoun, which normally would not head an NP. Another possible analysis makes the fronted absolutive pronoun the stative verb itself. As I have it here, I have add a lexical entry for the absolutive pronoun, that acts like an independent pronoun:

In	N	(↑ABS PRED)= 'pro' (↑ABS PERS) = 1 (↑ABS NUM) = sg (↑ABS)= (↑ FOCUS)

The analysis given above of Ixil is meant to be a descriptive tool, to better explicate the empirical facts of Ixil clause structure. Given the syntactic facts I see no IP endocentric head structure common to other analyses (Aissen, 1992; Broadwell, 2000, Duncan, 2003). That is, I see no preverbal slot for the 'agent' to land in. Even when the F_{cop} is absent I assume that the NP in those cases has predicational properties associated with it. Given this fact, in addition to the AF's discourse/pragmatics characteristics as a specificational cleft construction, I see no reason not to assume a bi-clausal structure. How to account for the other facts within this bi-clausal structure is another matter, one only a liberal theory of syntax like LFG can allow. I doubt that assigning predicates to NP's is a syntactic orthodoxy.

In the AF trees above the particular lexical entries, in addition to phrase structure rules, bring us from a simple flat structure to a complex bi-clausal structure. The morpheme *–on* kicks off the lexical information of the ergative argument of the subordinate verb. More than this, the morpheme mandates that the verb looks elsewhere for its semantic interpretation. As I argue the controlling relation between the matrix ABS and the subordinate ERG is an anaphoric relation. This is preferred

over functional control as there does not seem to be identity between the equations in the f-structure. If there were identity between the f-structures, this would mean, by a logical transitive relation, that the ERG member of the subordinate verb is in the FOCUS domain, an undesirable thing in terms of Ixil grammar. The whole point of the construction, I feel, is to block this fact, namely to prevent a focal ergative agent. The importance of *ergative extraction* described in grammars and literature of Mayan languages, has not been flushed out in formal attempts of syntactic analysis. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the construction is a paradox in terms of compositionality. As Lambrecht (2001) notices, clefts defy strict semantic composition as two predicates express the same event. In order to grasp the AF in LFG, I had to account for this non-compositionality via anaphoric rules in a bi-clausal structure.

Undoubtedly, the above analysis has some holes in it. I have tried to limit myself to how the AF could be analyzed in LFG, thus limiting myself to data that relates to the AF. There will have to be refinements when the rest of the clause structures, voices[21], etc. are examined. The main point I wanted to get across, that the AF is a bi-clausal cleft, and it can be analyzed as such in LFG, I feel I have shown. This analysis is grounded in a desire to explain discourse level structures in the syntax of Ixil. I am particularly interested in the discourse structures that depend upon information structure primitives as shown in section 3.3. The AF form and function are conditioned in equal parts by the discourse context and the syntax.

[21] This is especially true of the absolutive antipassive voice, as it uses a phonologically identical morpheme *–on* to indicate the change in voice, in the same post-verbal slot.

6.0 Conclusion

The AF is a complex, bi-clausal construction that is a clear response to the needs of discourse level information structure on transitive clauses in Ixil. The empirical facts suggest that the AF is built piece meal from other constructions. This implicitly relies on a Construction Grammar approach (Kay & Fillmore, 1991; Lambrecht, 1992, 2001) that views constructions as form-meaning primitives, built from other more simple pieces of the grammar. More specifically, I feel that the data, especially discourse data, should drive the syntactic analysis. This line of thinking is especially intriguing for syntactic theory in Mayan languages. Namely, with respect to Ixil AF cleft constructions, we see how a complex construction is built-up out of other pieces of the grammar to form unique structures. In these constructions the speakers of Ixil use stative predication constructions in addition to dependent clause structures to build-up a more complex cleft construction.

The work on the AF is not done, nor is a general account of information structure in Ixil. The semantics of focus predication is not fully explicated in this paper. The focus partition of the construction handles contrast, as has been stated. The nature of the presupposed predicate is not as well discussed here. Especially interesting is how the predicate and the ergative argument are interpreted. I have defended the idea that it remains a transitive verb despite the lack of the ergative marker. If this is true, then there must be some sort of semantic reference to this, something of the nature of a variable instantiation, because what is presupposed is the fact that some unspecified person does a specified and presupposed event. How this should be represented in formal theory I leave for another time

Appendix

An extended note must be given here with data from Icelandic to explain why I feel that the control relation in the AF construction is anaphoric rather than functional. Functional control is characterized by a few things. It seems that the most characteristic feature of functional control relations centers on the handling of case. Namely, case is maintained on the 'raised' NP and is responsible for 'quirky' cases as in Icelandic. Notice in the following data used to explicate functional control in many textbooks where the case of the 'raised' subject remains the same:

1.Dative subject:

Barninu *batnadi* *veikin.*
child.DEF.DAT recovered.from disease.DEF.NOM
The child recovered from the disease.'

2. Dative "raised" object:

Hann telur barninu *(i barnaskap sinum) hafa*
he believes child.DEF.DAT (in foolishness his) to.have

batnad *veikin.*
recovered.from disease.DBF. NOM
'He believes the child (in his foolishness) to have recovered from the disease.'

Icelandic has nominative case that normally marks the subject of the sentence, this nominative case is said to be trumped by case that is lexically assigned, as in the dative case assigned by the predicate *batnadi* [recovered.from]. Dalrymple (2001: 317) says of this data:

> The position of the parenthesized adjunct *i barnaskap sinum* 'in his foolishness', which is a matrix clause modifier, shows that the "raised" constituent does indeed appear as the OBJ of the matrix clause and not as a constituent of the subordinate clause. Since this argument is also the SUBJ of the subordinate XCOMP, the constraints on casemarking that the

> subordinate XCOMP verb imposes on this argument must be met for the sentence to be wellformed.

As we have seen, the AF construction in Ixil does not maintain the remnants of 'case' for the raised agent. Or rather, since Mayan languages do not express the equivalent of what is typically understood as case in the Indo-European since, an NP (the agent) is not allowed to be referred to by an ergative pronoun on the verb. This is to say that ergative 'case' (or rather the verbal agreement system equivalent in Ixil) of the focused agent is not maintained, as the ergative pronoun is restricted. Functional control is therefore characterized by maintaining the same functional structure, which is to say, that the controlled NP has identical features and equations. Dalrymple (2001: 315) states further:

> In constructions involving functional control, in which the same argument is both an argument of the matrix verb and the SUBJ of the subordinate XCOMP, any syntactic restrictions that are imposed on the SUBJ in the subordinate clause must also hold for the "raised" argument, since the same f-structure appears in both the matrix and subordinate clause.

For all intensive purposes, as far as the formalism is concerned the functions of the controlling NP and the controlled NP are exactly the same, giving rise to quirky case marking in Icelandic. The since the case is assigned lexically, when the NP enters the derivation it starts out as a Dative (or other) and stays so after being 'raised'. This does not seem to be the case in Ixil. Another strategy, called ergative extraction, takes place. This divides a simple clause in two and thus allows two absolutive pronouns and referents. The AF in Ixil eliminates the normal ergative relation of the 'raised' ergative agent; notice again the data here:

3. Ixil Agent-Focus construction
a) Neutral active-direct transitive

[Kat= un-tzok]	*{u*	*si'-e'}*
comp.=1sErg.-CUT.3Abs.	def.	FIREWOOD-enc.

'I cut the firewood.'

b) Agent-Focus cleft construction

[In] *{kat=tzok-on* *u* *si'-e'}*
1sAbs. compl.=CUT-af.3Abs. def. FIREWOOD-enc.
'It is me who cut the firewood.'

c) AF with two absolutives

[In] *{ni=loch-on=axh}*
1sAbs. incompl.-HELP-af=2sAbs.
'It is I who is helping you.'

More than this the subordinate verb is a case of a complement clause as it is clearly not allowed to move, and nothing is allowed to intervene besides the complement clause marker *va.*

Further negative evidence against a functional control analysis lies in the lexical entries for the focus copula. If we had functional control we would have to write an equation something like the following for an AF construction:

A	V	(↑PRED)= 'F_{cop} <↑ABS, ↑COMP> ↑ERG'
		(↑ABS) = (↑ COMP ERG)
		etc.

This analysis might work in the AF context of the Fcop, but does not take into account an the other uses of *a,* namely other cleft constructions like the following:

4. Lexical patient of transitive cleft

(A) *u q-aq'om* *va* *kat=ku-b'an*
(F_{cop}.3Abs) def. 1pErg.-WORK comp. compl.=1pErg.-DO.3Abs.
'It is our work that we do'

Here we would have to write another lexical entry for the focus copula *a* . Namely, one that allows co-reference between two absolutives for other instances of cleft constructions:

A	V	(↑PRED)= 'F_{cop} <↑ABS, ↑COMP> ↑ABS' (↑ABS) = (↑ COMP ABS) etc.

This also does not account for the function AF morpheme in the derivation. Namely, if the control situations are governed by the focus predicate then the morpheme *-on* does not have a clear function and reason for being expressed.

The other option is anaphoric control, which I feel fits the data better. An obligatory anaphoric relation seems to exist in the AF and other cleft constructions, one that is regulated by the functions associated with the AF morpheme *–on*. Specifically:

-on	AF_{morph}	(↑ERG PRED) = 'PRO' (↑ERG INDEX) = ((COMP ↓) ABS INDEX)

In Ixil anaphoric relations seem to exist naturally between two absolutive pronouns and their referents. Only when this natural, which is to say pragmatically neutral, relation of control between two absolutive referents is not maintained, as in the AF, does there have to be special equations to ensure a proper reading. This is to say that we should write into the –on morpheme entry the equations that control the odd anaphoric situation of control, and not write two separate entries for the focus copula *a*, as would be the case with functional control.

Abbreviations

Abs.	Absolutive
Af.	Agent-focus
Ap.	Anitpassive
Caus.	Causative
Comp.	Complementizer
Compl.	Completive aspect
Def.	Definite article
Dir.	Directional
Erg.	Ergative
Enc.	Clause final enclitic
Incep	Inceptive aspect
Incom.	Incomplete aspect
Ind.	Independent pronoun
Indef.	Indefinite article
Irr.	Irrealis
Lf.	Locative focus
Ncl.	Nominal classifier
Neg.	Negative
Pl.	Plural
Rep.	Repetitive adverb
RN#1	Relational noun, *to*
RN#2	Relational noun, reflexive
Sta.	Status marker
Sta.neg	Stative negative

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